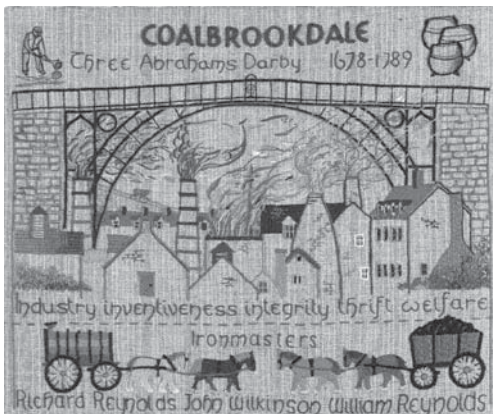


The Quaker Tapestry

In this journal we have often paid tribute to the Quaker contribution to business life in this country, an influence out of all proportion to their size. During the second half of the nineteenth century, when at the height of their commercial influence, they numbered less than 20,000 people. But the Quakers were prominent in banking, insurance, confectionery, drinks, engineering, railways, steel, soap, pharmaceuticals, shoes and textiles. We rightly revere the likes of Joseph Rowntree and George Cadbury as outstanding Christian businessmen – shrewd entrepreneurs, caring employers and generous givers.



The Quaker Tapestry is an international community project

which was embroidered by over 4,000 men, women and children between 1981 and 1996. Fit to compare with the Bayeux Tapestry, the 77 panels celebrate Quaker history, ideas, faith and practice from the 17th to the 20th centuries. They are as colourful as they are informative.

The panels cover a diverse range of subjects including the preaching of George Fox, Quaker ideas on marriage, Quaker botanists and scientists, Quaker education, efforts to reform the criminal law and their commitment to the international peace movement. Inevitably, Quaker immersion in commerce and industry features prominently.

There are panels depicting:

- Coalbrookdale – the three Abraham Darbys who were pioneering ironmasters, with the words

industry, inventiveness, integrity, thrift and welfare woven across their picture

- Quaker Merchants – ‘keeping their word and promises, they gained credit in the country’
- The Quaker Trade of Bankering (as it used to be called) – featuring the delightful story of how Jonathan Backhouse balanced the cash in 1819
- George Stephenson and Edward Pease, examples of Quaker Enterprise – men who ‘shared a vision and built a railway’
- Industrial Welfare – commemorating the London Lead Co, Rowntree, Huntley & Palmer, and Cadbury’s Bournville garden suburb
- Scott Bader, the chemicals company which pioneered the Industrial Common Ownership movement.

The Quaker Tapestry’s home is the Friends Meeting House in Kendal, Cumbria, but it is frequently exhibited elsewhere. The tapestry has travelled to more than 150 venues in the UK, Europe and America. During February it has been on display in the lady chapel of Ely Cathedral. Do keep a look-out for it coming to your area. It is as inspiring as it is beautiful. ■

